

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7632

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, GR

SUBJECT: ALEXANDER PANAGOULIS PARDONED, LAUNCHES CANDIDACY

1. SUMMARY.THE ONCE WOULD-BE ASSASSIN AND NOW PROMINENT YOUNGER PERSONALITY OF THE CENTER UNION-NEW FORCES, ALEXANDER PANAGOULIS, HAS RECEIVED A SPECIAL PARDON FOR PREVIOUS OFFENSES AND IS CANDIDATE FOR DEPUTY FROM ATHENS. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCEMENT OCTOBER 18 SAID ALEXANDER PANAGOULIS WAS PARDONED FROM ALL CONSEQUENCES RESULTANT TO HIS CONVICTION BY COURT MARTIAL AND ALL CIVIL RIGHTS WERE RESTORED TO HIM OCTOBER 17. ANNOUNCEMENT EMPHASIZED THAT ALTHOUGH PARDON HAD BEEN ARRANGED OCTOBER 7, PROMULGATION WAS DELAYED BECAUSE OF CHANGE OF JUSTICE MINISTERS. (COMMENT. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS LAST WEEK HAD OBSERVED PANAGOULIS COULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE BECAUSE HE HAD NOT BEEN PARDONED AND PUBLICIZED FACT HE HAD REFUSED TO APPLY FOR A PARDON FOR RESISTANCE ACTS WHICH HE DID NOT CONSIDER TO HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL IN FIRST PLACE.)

3. AFTER UNCONDITIONAL PARDON, PANAGOULIS MOVED FAST AND EVENING OCTOBER 18 HE OPENED CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS IN DOWNTOWN ATHENS AND ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR DEPUTY FROM ATHENS IN
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ADVANCE OF THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CANDIDATES THROUGH THE

OFFICE OF PARTY LEADER OF THE CENTER UNION - NEW FORCES GEORGE MAVROS. ON OCTOBER 19 MAVROS INTRODUCED PARTY PLATFORM IN SPEECH (SEPTEL) OF WHICH MAJOR EXCERPTS TELEVISED IN PRIME TIME SUNDAY EVENING. PANAGOULIS WAS GIVEN PLACE OF VISUAL HONOR BEHIND RIGHT SHOULDER OF PARTY LEADER.

4. ALEXANDER PANAGOULIS WAS ARRESTED AUGUST 13, 1968 WHEN HE TRIED TO BLOW UP THE CAR OF JUNTA LEADER GEORGE PAPADOPOULOS. SUBSEQUENTLY HE RECEIVED TWO DEATH SENTENCES FOR DESERTION FROM THE ARMY AND ATTEMPTING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT, PLUS FIFTEEN YEARS FOR THE ATTEMPTED KILLING. HE WAS KEPT IN MILITARY PRISONS UNDER DEATH SENTENCE AND USUALLY IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, EXCEPT FOR BRIEF, DRAMATIC ESCAPE IN 1969, UNTIL RELEASED IN GENERAL AMNESTY OF AUGUST, 1973. HE THEN WENT INTO EXILE IN ITALY. LAST NOVEMBER HE WAS DENIED VISA TO U.S. IN PART BECAUSE OF HIS CONVICTION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENSES UNDER JUNTA.

5. NEUTRAL CRITICS HAVE BEEN LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PANAGOULIS' RESISTANCE IMAGE - CITING HIS "TEDDY BOY" YOUNGER DAYS, THE MELODRAMATIC URGES OF HIS MOTHER AND TWO BROTHERS, BOTH OF WHOM WERE ALSO PERSECUTED FOR DESERTION AND RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES, AND HIS "ADOPTION" FOR PUBLICITY PURPOSES BY LADY FLEMING DURING HER LONDON CRUSADE AGAINST TORTURE BY THE JUNTA. NONETHELESS, HE IS A POPULAR RESISTANCE SYMBOL IN ATHENS AND FOR SOME YOUNG GREEKS POSSIBLY CLOSEST HELLENIC FACSIMILE TO CHE GUEVERA. HIS AFFILIATION UPON HIS RETURN IN LATE AUGUST WITH THE CENTER UNION, BECOMING CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY'S YOUTH MOVEMENT, WAS A CONTROVERSIAL STEP FOR THE CENTER UNION DESPITE ACCLAMATION BY YOUTH. IT WAS ALSO A SUPRISE SINCE PANAGOULIS BY VIRTUE OF HIS ESPOUSAL OF SOCIALISM AND VIOLENT RESISTANCE COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO IDENTIFY WITH ANDREAS PAPANDREOU. POPULARITY OF PANAGOULIS MAY BE HEIGHTENED BY THE OPENING LAST WEEK OF THE CONTROVERSIAL FILM "STATE OF SIEGE" BY GREEK DIRECTOR COSTAS GRAVAS. SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE FILM'S MESSAGE -- THAT POLITICAL ASSASSINATION IS MORALLY JUSTIFIED IN FIGHTING POLITICAL AND POLICE TYRANNY - PANAGOULIS COULD BECOME A FOLK HERO AMONG ATHENIAN YOUTH.

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